

United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Regional Administrator
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

Region 9:
Arizona, California,
Hawaii, Nevada and the
Pacific Islands

EPA

Environmental News

For Immediate Release: Oct. 17, 2003
Contact: Mark Merchant, (415) 947-4297

U.S. EPA funds almond pesticide study in three California counties

SAN FRANCISCO – The U.S. EPA announced recently that it has awarded a \$40,000 grant to the California Department of Pesticide Regulation to assist almond growers in Butte, Kern and Stanislaus counties.

The grant will help growers understand new state regulations that protect waterways from pesticide impacts, and will support the almond industry's efforts to promote more environmentally sensitive methods of pest control.

Administered by the state, this grant will foster cooperation with the Almond Board of California, growers and pest management advisors, the University of California Cooperative Extension and county agricultural commissioners.

California's almond industry has demonstrated leadership in addressing the environmental issue of surface water contamination from pesticide use, which is a regulatory target of two California agencies.

Thanks to the almond industry's past integrated pest management research and its efforts under the Pest Management Alliance – funded for five years by the state's Department of Pesticide Regulation – the almond industry now boasts a strong foundation of scientific research and demonstration of a reduced-risk system of almond production across a network of research and demonstration sites in the three counties.

"We appreciate the Almond Board's leadership in demonstrating with growers how voluntary changes in pest management practices can ease the pressures of new regulations and, that regulatory and voluntary approaches taken together can address environmental impacts and offer measurable improvements," said Enrique Manzanilla, director of the Cross Media Division in the EPA's Pacific Southwest regional office in San Francisco. "I'm very glad that the Department of Pesticide Regulation

and the Almond Board have agreed to do this work and I'm very glad that the EPA was able to fund it."

"The timing for this grant could not be better," said DPR Director Paul Helliker. "In the years that DPR provided Pest Management Alliance grants to the industry, we saw almond growers reduce their use of chlorpyrifos from 298,000 pounds to 163,000 pounds a year. And diazinon use dropped from 114,000 pounds to 63,000 pounds a year. Both pesticides are a concern because of runoff into surface waters, so the results were impressive."

Unfortunately, the Alliance grant program was suspended last year, due to state budget cuts, said Helliker. "EPA's grant will further help almond growers develop dormant season pest management strategies that are productive from both an environmental and economic standpoint."

Preliminary results show that extensive orchard monitoring is the key to success in controlling key pests and diseases and that reduced risk practices appear to be controlling pests below economic damage levels, according to Chris Heintz, the Almond Board's director of research.

The new EPA grant will help almond growers understand the relationship between their pest management practices and the state's dormant season spray regulations and pollutant loads into waterways, and will broaden the availability of information about reduced-risk alternatives to the use of pesticides during the dormant season.

"The impacts of dormant sprays and economic analysis of possible alternatives have been an important component of this ongoing program," noted Heintz. "This grant will enable the industry to continue educational efforts about dormant spray impacts and best management practices."